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ABSTRACT

Many teachers not trained in English as a second language (ESL) often feel at a disadvantage when they are working with children whose first language is not English. This book addresses this disadvantage by giving practical information and teaching aids. The first area investigated is registration. Questions are suggested and the use to which answers can be put is outlined. A second issue is helping children adjust to a new culture. It is suggested that teachers talk to members of the ethnic group under consideration. Questions leading to examination of the similarities and differences between cultures are suggested. Next, oral fluency, reading, and writing acquisition are discussed and activities are proposed for the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Ways of fostering concept development are described and an outline of facts relating language learning to concept development, along with suggested applications is provided. Finally, a number of lesson plans are given as models and six steps are suggested for bridging the gap from ESL to the regular curriculum. An annotated list of resources completes the booklet. (AMH)

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LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION:
Theory and Practice

45

Mary Ashworth
and Patricia Wakefield

Teaching the Non-English-Speaking Child: Grades K-2

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Sophia Behrens, Editor

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Overview

Like many areas of education, language learning is fraught with myths and half-truths that are constantly being exploded. For instance, young children do not "catch" a new language as they would a contagious disease! Children who do not speak English are verbally isolated at first from their peers, who may not necessarily be willing to talk to newcomers. If an attempt to open a conversation is met by a rebuff or by criticism, non-English-speaking children may lose the motivation to try to master the new language and may be content only to learn enough English to "get by," with disastrous results as they progress through school. Children learning a second language respond to stimulation, encouragement, and monitoring in much the same way that they responded in their early years to their parents' teaching of their first language--that is, they need an adult model and adult intervention as well as an opportunity to work and play alongside English-speaking children of their own age group. Teachers' tasks will be made easier through an understanding of first and second language acquisition theories and a knowledge of the skills that will enable them to translate theory into practice.

Children who arrive at school speaking a language other than English are not linguistically or culturally deprived. They bring with them a knowledge of the customs, traditions, and values learned at home; they have their own linguistic and cultural experiences; and they come with some built-in expectations of school.

While teachers are well aware of the need to accept children as they are and to work from there, teachers who have not received special training in ESL (English as a second language) often feel at a disadvantage when working with children whose first language is not English. It is this disadvantage that this booklet will address. We will begin by looking at the registration process and will then suggest some ways in which young children can be helped to make the necessary adjustments to the new language and culture. The next two sections will deal with the teaching of the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These will be followed by discussions on concept building and ways in which teachers can help to bridge the gap between the entry competencies of ESL children and those required by the curriculum. We will conclude by looking at intercultural relations in the school and the community and at some resources available to teachers.

Because the span of abilities within a class and the rate of language development of individual ESL children vary so much during the primary years (ages 5 - 7), classification of activities into specific grade levels is difficult, if not impossible. We have faith that teachers will be able to adapt and improve upon our ideas.

Learning about the Children

The more teachers know about the children they teach, the more they can help them. When a new ESL child registers at the school for the first time, in addition to asking the usual questions regarding name, address, age, etc., teachers may find it helpful to pose, perhaps through an interpreter, some of the questions listed below. The use to which the answers can be put follows the questions. The information obtained should be on file for continual reference.

Question: 1. What language(s) is spoken
- by the child?
- by the mother?
- in the home?

Application: Languages differ in their patterns of sound, structure, and use. Knowing what some of these differences are helps the teacher to become sensitive to the stages of the child's second language development. The first step is to know which language(s) the child speaks or is exposed to.

Question: 2. When did the child speak his or her first word in the native language? Does the child have any difficulty speaking the native language?

Application: This may be valuable information at a later date. If the child seems to be slow in acquiring English, the fact that he or she was slow in acquiring the native language or encountered difficulties may be indicative of a slow rate of learning or of a more serious problem.

Question: 3. How does the child usually spend a day at home?

Application: The answer to this question will provide information on the child's experiences with toys, games, and household tasks as well as on the child's relationships with other family members such as grandparents. The teacher can use this

information as a basis for learning activities in school, e.g., the language experience approach to reading and writing, story telling, crafts, and physical activities.

Question: 4. What is the composition of the family circle? Who lives in the home? Who visits frequently? Who has the major responsibility for the child's care and upbringing?

Application: From this and the preceding information, the teacher will be able to determine the kind of behavior expected of the child at home and how this varies from behavior expected in school. This information will enable the teacher to build a bridge between the expectations of the home and the school.

Question: 5. What previous group experiences has the child had

- within the family circle?
- outside the family?
- with different age groups?
- with the same or opposite sex?

Application: This information will provide the teacher with a base on which to build more complex group experiences. Language learning requires cooperation, participation, and communication in a variety of situations. A child who has had no experiences outside the family may need help over an extended period of time in adjusting to unfamiliar group contacts and demands.

Question: 6. What is the attitude of the home toward

- learning English?
- maintaining the first language?

Application: In planning the child's program, the teacher needs to know whether or not the home can be counted on to reinforce the English learned at school and to support the child with positive attitudes toward the new language and culture.

If it is the desire of the family that the child maintain the first language, the teacher can add support by encouraging attendance at heritage language classes and by providing opportunities for the child to share the first language and culture with the rest of the children.

A visit to the child's home, accompanied by a bilingual worker if necessary, can be very helpful in establishing comfortable home-school relationships. (A bilingual worker can often suggest the best way to make the initial approach to the parents so that the visit will not impose on their hospitality.) It can also be an occasion to encourage parents to increase their own English language skills by attending a local ESL class.

Helping Children Adjust to the New Culture

Culture reflects human traditions, different lifestyles, and patterned ways of thinking and behaving. Culture is not innate but is transmitted from adults to children, and from children to children. All children bring to school the culture of their home environment, and all take home with them the culture of the school. For most middle-class English-speaking children, the home and school cultures are very similar; for non-English-speaking children or for children from a different socioeconomic class, the difference between the two cultures can be great. Teachers who understand the differences among the various cultures can often help to ease the trauma of adjustment that many children must go through.

There are many aspects of culture well worth investigating. Numerous useful books have been published on the topic, but a few hours spent in frank talk with a member of the ethnic group under consideration will usually provide extensive and valuable information. The questions listed below cover the major aspects of immediate concern to teachers and serve as good "openers" for a more detailed examination of similarities and differences between cultures.

Question: 1. What gestures are used to signal such meanings as "Come here" or "Good-bye"? Is it polite for children to look adults in the eye when speaking to them? What other nonverbal language is widely used?

Application: Because many "hidden messages" are sent by various forms of nonverbal language, a gesture or a look wrongly interpreted can cause misunderstanding and embarrassment. A knowledge of these differences will enable children and teachers to "read" each other better, particularly during the initial period when the children speak little English.

Question: 2. How would the children be dressed for school in their native country? What aspects of dress might the parents insist on retaining here?

Application: Some dress has religious significance, e.g., Sikh boys may wear their hair long, tied up on top of their heads in a handkerchief; Moslem girls do not expose their arms and legs. Teachers can help these children to avoid ridicule by explaining the significance of their dress to other children when necessary.

Question: 3. What foods are taboo? What North American foods are probably unknown to the family? What foods constitute the main diet? What implements are used in eating?

Application: Children should not be forced to eat foods that are not allowed in their own culture. Some children are laughed at when they disclose the food they have brought for snacks and lunch. Teachers can be supportive of the children while exposing them to North American foods.

Question: 4. What games do children play? With whom do they play? What emphasis do parents put on the value of play?

Application: Play is not regarded in all cultures as essential to children's development. Some parents consider sandboxes, water tables, puppets, games, and field trips as quite unnecessary. School, in their opinion, should consist solely of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Teachers can help these parents to reassess the value of play. Games from other countries can be taught to all children.

Question: 5. What duties are children expected to perform around the home? Are boys treated differently from girls? What is the relationship between children and adults?

Application: In some cultures where men are still very much the dominant sex, boys do not help in the home and may behave in ways that would not be tolerated in girls. These boys--and their fathers!--may need help in adjusting to women teachers. The girls may need to be drawn out.

Question: 6. What teaching methods will the children have encountered at home and in school? Are they accustomed to learning by watching and listening, by being asked questions, or by asking questions? Are they used to rote learning or to the discovery method? Which is stressed, cooperation or competition? How are children disciplined?

Application: Children's learning styles are formed in the home according to the customs and beliefs prevalent in the surrounding society. If the teaching style of the teacher is very different from the learning style of the child, confusion and frustration can occur. It is better initially to adjust teaching strategies to accommodate the child's own learning style, and then gradually introduce the different teaching style. Children may also need time to accustom themselves to a different style of discipline.

Question: 7. Is the culture future-oriented or present-oriented? Is punctuality a virtue?

Application: Attitudes toward time vary from culture to culture, even within the English-speaking world. Teachers who are aware of these differences will find it easier to understand why parents and children do not observe all the dominant culture customs initially.

Question: 8. Apart from illness, why might children be kept home from school?

Application: Some parents consider that their children's first responsibility is to the home, not to the school, and will therefore keep them home when there is work to be done on the land, in the store, or looking after younger children. Children may also be kept home for the observance of a holy day. Teachers or bilingual home-school workers may have to explain attendance regulations to the parents and emphasize the need for regular and prompt attendance to ensure continual exposure to English and continuity of education.

Question: 9. What expectations do parents have of schools? What aspirations do they have for their children?

Application: Parents' expectations of school are usually built on their own youthful experiences. If parents are to be supportive of their children, they must understand the school's programs and options, its goals and philosophy. Teachers who appreciate some of the broad differences between school systems can help parents achieve this necessary understanding. Teachers can also work with parents whose aspirations for their children are too high or too low.

Question: 10. Which major festivals are likely to be observed?

Application: Children are delighted when a festival that is honored in their culture is given recognition in school. Teachers who acknowledge special days help to bridge the gap between cultures for children of both the minority and majority ethnic groups.

The suggestions that follow are designed to help teachers assist parents and children to adjust to the new culture, and particularly to the school system. (Activities designed to foster good intercultural relations will be found on pp. 43 - 45.)

- Set up a buddy system for the children, first using someone who speaks their language, and then later an English-speaking buddy.

- Arrange for the children to become familiar with the school and its environment--for example, short visits to the nurse's office, the washroom, the lunchroom, and the playground.

- Do not overwhelm the children with too many toys and materials on the first day. Some children may never have seen such an array of materials and may either overreact or withdraw in fear.

- Let the children watch quietly from the side, if that is their preference, but talk to them often. Do let them know that you know that they are there! Older students say they were sometimes made to feel "invisible" by teachers who appeared to ignore their presence.

- Have an aide or an older child teach the ESL children handwork skills they may not have learned at home, e.g., cutting out or pasting. Capitalize on skills the children do have, such as working with clay or threading beads.

- Encourage the children to "play house" with the other children and in this way to act out different roles.

- Reward acceptable behavior and, if possible, ignore what appears to be deviant behavior, giving the children time to adjust to new behavior patterns. This apparently deviant behavior may be perfectly acceptable in the children's homes and immediate community.

- Use dolls and puppets to show acceptable behavior patterns--for example, looking an adult in the eye when speaking to or greeting him or her.

- Invite parents to visit the school and to observe the class in action. Encourage them to bring an interpreter, if they wish, who can explain what is happening and why.

- Visit the home if possible, but check with a member of the ethnic community first as to the best way to initiate a visit. If a bilingual home-school worker is not available to accompany you, try to find a member of the ethnic community who will act as an interpreter.

- Ask parents to supply the name, address, and telephone number of an English-speaking friend who can be contacted in an emergency.

- If the children seem underclad, undernourished, or overtired, report this to the school nurse immediately. Parents may be having trouble getting the right clothes or buying foods they like and may be glad to have advice. Parents may be having difficulty themselves in adjusting to the new culture.

- Incorporate into the curriculum lessons designed to teach about foods, nutrition, and clothing.

- Watch for signs of [illegible]. While many children are remarkably resilient to change, others break down under pressure and may either become rude, violent, and overactive, or withdraw physically and mentally. Seek help and advice quickly.

- Do not permit any ridiculing of the children's behavior, dress, or food by other children or by other teachers. If teachers are prepared to accept and enjoy differences between cultures, their attitudes will ensure a good school atmosphere that will greatly assist the newcomer to adjust to the new situation.

Oral Fluency

There is a great deal of controversy over how a second language is acquired. Historically, the widely held belief that all young children learn chiefly by imitation led to the practice of 'non-intervention' with language during the primary years. Recent studies, however--particularly in Britain--have pointed out the importance of adults' monitoring and stimulating second language development (Tough 1977, Garvie 1976) and intervening when necessary in much the same way as in first language development. If children are to reach the ultimate goal of fluency in a second language, that is, the ability to function with ease linguistically and culturally in any social situation, they must have knowledgeable, sensitive teachers who can facilitate the process.

In order to understand second language acquisition in children in the primary grades, it is vital to understand the process of first language acquisition, as there are some important similarities and differences. Furthermore, strategies employed by parents for stimulating and encouraging language development vary to some degree between cultures and between social classes.

As children acquire their first language, they listen to and internalize the sounds, the intonation, and the patterns of words necessary for them to function in their environment. They learn to respond to voices, to social situations, and to experiences. Relationships with the people around them are established and developed partly by participation in and response to language. At a very early age, all children learn first to associate language with meaning, and later to use language to express meaning.

Although all normal children learn to use their 'home' language, it is clear that the strategies employed by parents to guide experiences and stimulate responses affect the development of linguistic and communicative competence. Some parents accompany the daily rituals of bathing, feeding, and changing with a constant stream of talk, so that the children begin to associate the 'talk' with the activity. They gradually become aware that the pauses can be filled by a verbal response from them, so the beginnings of conversational exchanges take place.

Although very young children spend a good portion of their day sleeping, the stimulus of being with people should not be underestimated. Children in large families often learn to talk more quickly simply because there are more people around to talk to them, to manipulate objects for them, and to show interest in them. Conversely, however, some children in large families are late in talking because their wants and needs are always anticipated and there is no strong motivation for verbal communica-

tion. Parents can encourage children's language by answering questions, by giving information in increasing amounts, by demonstrating, and--perhaps most important of all--by showing genuine interest during periods of undivided attention. The attitudes instilled at this stage of language development have an important effect on children's ability to learn.

Of what significance is this in relation to children's acquisition of a second language? What are the similarities, the differences, and the influences of one on the other?

Children are children the world over. In India, babies gurgle and coo in much the same way as babies in North America. After a few months, they begin to respond to the sounds and music of the language they hear around them, to the sounds they are beginning to associate with the fulfillment of their needs--feeding, soothing, changing, and so on. The sounds a child makes that correspond to sounds in the native language are reinforced by encouraging responses from the mother, while unwanted sounds are screened out due to lack of reinforcement. Gradually, the child's language extends to include words, phrases, and sentences.

Any child learning a second language has this foundation. The new language is filtered through, added to, and--to some extent--influenced by the first language. In any event, the first language cannot and should not be ignored. It is an integral part of the child's being and can be a positive force in the process of acquiring another language. The development of strategies to help children learn a second language must take into account the contribution the learners can make by calling on the knowledge they have already acquired about language and language learning. For example:

- Children bring to this learning task a knowledge of what language is. They have mastered many of the skills in listening and talking--perhaps even some in reading and writing.
- They are aware of what language does; they can ask for things, explain things, socialize, and much more.
- They have the ability to play with language in songs, games, poetry, and jokes.
- They have the ability to work out the rules of a language, to test the rules, and to make adjustments naturally and easily.

A good second language learning environment is one in which children (1) hear the language spoken; (2) use the language

in relevant situations, (3) interact with other children and with adults; and (4) observe interactions between adults, between children and adults, and between children.

Some people argue that a young child should not learn a second language until the first is firmly established; others favor a bilingual approach. But the fact is that in many parts of North America, schools have no option but to teach the child English as a second language on entry, no matter how young or how old the child is, in order that he or she can take advantage of the monolingual educational system.

However, it is the responsibility of any educational system to add to what the learner brings, not detract from it. The first language--the language of the home--should be respected and supported if the student's self-concept is to remain positive. A bilingual program in the school may not be possible, but an encouraging attitude toward the development of bilingualism in the individual student is.

Much of the language of young children (ages 4 - 7, Piaget's stage of intuitive thought) is egocentric, centered around things and events that have a direct relevance to the child's 'here and now.' In short, children for the most part talk to themselves with no desire or intention to communicate with others. Gradually, as they are exposed to new experiences and concepts, they begin to develop verbal labels to express their mental images (Charles 1974). If children whose first language is not English are not allowed to use the language they know and have insufficient command of the new language to express their thoughts, cognitive development may be delayed. Language and thought are so closely related that teachers cannot afford to restrict talk in any language.

Although some districts have specialist teachers trained to assist children in ESL, primary teachers, whose training may not have included work in linguistics, often assume this responsibility in addition to their regular teaching load. Following are relevant facts from well-documented linguistic theory (see Resource section) and their practical application to the classroom.

Fact: 1. Every language has its own interrelated systems of phonology, morphology, and syntax. These systems are highly patterned and, in many instances, predictable.

Application: The patterns of language are controlled at first so children can acquire useful vocabulary within a constant frame. "What's this? It's a ball, truck, house," etc.

Fact: 2. Language is necessary to function in everyday social situations, e.g., to exchange greetings, to ask questions, to explain, to invite.

Application: Both asking and answering questions are essential for communication. The teacher encourages children to use language
- to greet other children;
- to ask for an object;
- to take a message to the office.

Fact: 3. Children already know how to use their own language appropriately. They will begin to learn another language by transferring some of the same strategies and rules. Gradually, however, by trial and error, they will organize and adjust the new language as they need it to function comfortably in the new environment. As they progress through the developmental stages of second language acquisition, they make generalizations much as they did in first language acquisition. Balanced bilinguals have mastered two linguistic systems that they can use independently without interference.

Application: The teacher extends the children's experience and the accompanying language by field trips, projects, role plays, etc. Participation in real situations stimulates the use of the new language and new strategies.

Fact: 4. Language and culture are interwoven. The social context for using language varies from culture to culture in many different ways. Tone and pitch of voice, volubility, manner of address, taboo subjects, and body gestures are variable components of all languages and therefore of communication.

Application: The teacher provides many opportunities for using language in a variety of contexts: talking to classmates, teachers, the principal, the school nurse, and visitors; making appointments and/or arrangements; reporting to a group; playing a role; etc.

Fact: 5. While acquiring the first language, children delight in playing with the sounds and melody being learned. The new sound system can be learned in much the same way.

Application: The teacher introduces action songs, games, poetry, etc. to encourage the children to experiment with the sounds and melody of the new language.

Activities

The four skills of language--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--are interrelated and interwoven. Development of aural-oral skills in the new language for young ESL children provides a necessary foundation for the future development of written skills.

Listening

It is important to remember that listening is an active skill, involving the students in decoding, sorting, classifying, and relating experiences in order to extract meaning. If listening is being used in combination with writing (e.g., the language experience approach), then encoding skills will be necessary as well as translation of pauses and intonation into punctuation symbols and sentence boundaries.

Story-Time

Story-time is a daily activity in most preschool and primary situations. Children from other cultures need more time for listening than is possible for the teacher to provide for the whole class. Following are some suggestions to supplement the regular story-time routine.

- Have the children listen to a story on tape (teacher's voice) accompanied by pictures or nonprint books. This could be a story previously read to the class.
- While they are listening to the story on tape, have the children sequence pictures according to what they hear.
- After they have listened to a tape, have the children draw a picture of the story, retell the story to the teacher or volunteer aide, role-play the story with puppets (or dolls), or tell another story (perhaps the story exists in a different version in their culture).

Rhythm

The melody of every language is different. Mastery of the intonation system of the second language is far more important to communication than mastery of individual sounds. Music and poetry are natural mediums for listening to and practicing the sound system:

I like cake and I like candy,
I like Mom to keep it handy.

After learning the words to a simple poem or rhyme such as the above, the children can be divided into groups--one group to clap the rhythm, one to use rhythm instruments, and one to recite.

As the class repertoire is built up, the children themselves will invent ways to play with the sound and intonation of the language (e.g., experimenting with pitch, intonation, moods, roles, etc.).

Children respond spontaneously to music by moving and singing. With subtle direction and imagination, the teacher can introduce concepts of happiness and sadness, loudness and softness, sweetness and harshness, and so on. The language to accompany the music can be introduced and expanded almost ad infinitum, giving the teacher opportunities to encourage verbal and cultural interchange:

This is happy music.
It makes me feel happy/sad.
When I close my eyes, what colors does the music make me see?
The notes of the music are dancing/skipping/singing.
Happy music can be loud or soft, noisy or quiet.
The sound of the violin is high and sweet.
The sound of the bass horn is low, sometimes soft and sweet, sometimes loud and harsh.
We play happy music at weddings and feast days.
We play sad music at _____.

Singing provides a natural medium for practicing the sounds, the patterns, and the rhythm of a language. If actions are incorporated as well, the children learn that oral language can be enhanced by nonverbal actions and that meaning can be conveyed by gestures as well as speech.

Play activities that emphasize listening provide a natural medium for developing listening skills:

Guessing games--	Identifying common sounds, listening for clues
Substitution games--	"Whenever you hear the number 7, clap."

Simon Says--	"Imitate the action only when Simon says, 'Place your hands on your head.'"
Bingo--	There are many variations (numbers, letters, words, definitions, etc.).

Spend some time every day discussing the 'constants': greetings, weather, calendar, birthdays, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The repetition of language for talking about such common topics enables children to use language for social interaction with classmates and adults:

What is the date today?	It's October 12th.
Is today Thursday?	No, it's Friday.
Whose birthday is it?	Jaswinder's.
What kind of weather is it today?	It's sunny.

Weather charts, seasonal pictures, creative calendars, and birthday cakes (real or simulated) are all useful in creating situations that encourage language.

Speaking

The oral language to which ESL children are introduced should reflect their immediate needs to adjust, to explore, and to function in their new environment. The necessary language is concrete, immediate, and egocentric. According to Tough (1977), children need language for five different purposes: (1) adjustment in the classroom; (2) self-help; (3) joining in; (4) finding out; and (5) extending learning.

Following are some suggestions for activities to develop language in young children learning English as a second language:

Language for adjustment in the classroom

Identifying and classifying classroom objects:

What's this?	It's a ball.
	It's red.
	It's round.

Following instructions.

Let's all join hands.
Make a line behind me.
Give the paste to Tony.
Sit beside Michelle.

Language for self-help

Children learn a great deal from each other. Wise teachers, therefore, will provide ample opportunities for students to interact, e.g.:

At the sand table

I can make a road. Will you help me?
Make it wide like this so big trucks can
go on it.
OK. I need the shovel.

or

In the cloakroom

Will you open my lunch box, please?
Please help me with my boots.

Language for joining in

Participatory play such as dressing up, playing house, or taking part in group games provides situations for the language of sharing, imagining, agreeing or disagreeing, and persuading or dissuading. The central focus is on the activity; the language stems from it:

Do you want to play with me?
You're the father--I'm the baby.
No, I want to be the baby.
I'm going to cook some eggs for supper.
I don't like eggs. Why don't we have hamburgers?

N.B.: In this kind of situation, the teacher's role is either that of a participant, facilitator, or observer. The activity is child-directed, and the flow of language should not be interrupted by corrections but may be stimulated by suggestions if necessary.

Choral response, action songs, and poetry recitation provide opportunities for ESL children to join in and practice language pleasurably and without stress.

Language for finding out

Discovery learning takes place in a variety of ways: field trips, group projects, or dramatic play. Children learning English as a second language need to use language to find out, to make observations, and to relate the new experience to what has gone before.

Where are we going?
How will we get there?
Which direction is it from our school?
Let's look at a map.
What are we going to see?
Is there a _____ in your country?

Language for extending learning

As ESL children develop or transfer concepts in English, they need language to give expression to the ideas they have or are developing. Blocks of different shapes and sizes, the sand box, the rice table, pictures, manipulative toys (cars, trains, dolls, and doll houses) will help them conceptualize size, shape, color, sequence, comparison, and so on. Oral expression will demand vocabulary, word order, and sentence patterns. The teacher can stimulate language without directing it:

Child

The car is red.
It's going down a hill.
It's turning left--put on the signal.
The green truck is coming.

Teacher stimulation

Which side of the road is it on?
What kind of truck is it?
Where is it going?

Reading and Writing

Reading

In North American schools, the skill of reading is given more prominence than any other. Failure to learn to read is, in many instances, equated with a failure to learn.

Children from other cultures entering the school system between the ages of 5 and 8 are probably preliterate in their native language, that is, they are too young to have been exposed to more than beginning reading, and, therefore, there will be little or no transfer of skills. Children whose first language is English, on the other hand, have had at least five years to internalize the sound system of the English language and to use and experience language in order to function in the environment. Such children are ready to begin developing skills in relating sounds to visual representation, in matching words and pictures,

and in recognizing sight words--in short, to begin the reading process.

Before deciding on methods to use in teaching ESL children to read, the teacher should be cognizant of the enormous task that faces the children.

- The written symbols represent a sound system that is unfamiliar. Unlike the children whose first language is English, ESL children have been exposed to the sound of English for only a short time.

- The word order, structures, and sound and sentence patterns are different from the children's first language.

- Concepts already developed in the first language may be conceptualized differently in English; for example, all cultures do not divide the color spectrum in the same way: the fact that a child does not seem to differentiate between yellow and green may indicate that in his or her native language there may be only one word for what we perceive in English as two colors.

- Meaning attached to experiences is culture-bound and does not translate exactly into another language.

In assessing ESL children's readiness to begin reading, the teacher, by using everyday strategies (e.g., observing the child, listening to the child, talking to the child, and engaging the child in tasks), will need to determine

- each learner's background of experience, concepts, and oral language development in the target language;

- each learner's needs for new labelling of familiar concepts;

- each learner's needs for experiences in the new language and environment; and

- each learner's interest in reading as demonstrated by his or her ability to relate sounds and words to visual representation, to listen to and use English functionally (e.g., retell stories, recite poems, etc.), to sequence events and pictures, and to interpret what he or she hears and sees.

The following suggestions stem from the assumption that reading is based on language and experience and therefore is an extension of the students' language development (see Stauffer 1970). No matter what reading program ESL students must ultimately fit into, the beginning steps should instill in them the desire to

expand what they already know and are interested in. Initial success in reading relevant material motivates the students to proceed and provides the teacher with a method that can be combined with others and can lead into a particular program being used in the school.

Reading Activities

Students, individually or in small groups, choose an experience that they wish to share. It may be a field trip, a picture, an object, a favorite story, or a filmstrip.

The teacher encourages the students to share the experience orally, stimulating the discussion with questions and suggestions. The teacher may wish to make brief notes on the board or chart for later work in sequencing. When the oral discussion is complete, the students dictate the story to the teacher, who writes it down verbatim. The teacher may help the students find appropriate words by questioning and may encourage them to discuss their choice of language, but it is important at this stage that the students' language be used, not the teacher's.

When the story is complete, the teacher reads while the students follow along. This activity is important because (1) it helps the students relate the spoken to the written message (it is at this time that students often hear a mistake they have not seen), and (2) it provides a fluency model.

The students can read the passage orally if ready. If they are not ready at this time, the teacher can use the passage to develop word recognition skills and to practice pronunciation and/or sentence patterns. Students should practice reading the story aloud to the teacher or to each other. The story will be familiar because it is written in their own words. The task of the students is to relate the oral and written symbols.

Students may now be ready to copy the story, depending on their ability to transcribe. Copying their own stories is a valuable activity for ESL students: they practice letter formation and direction, become aware of sentence and word formation, and learn the relationship between oral and written symbols. It is at this stage that self-correction often begins. The teacher can use the opportunity to encourage questioning, comparing, and self-criticism--the beginning of editing skills.

Stories that have been worked over and with which students themselves are satisfied can be compiled into individual or group booklets that become readers for the class. Students often want to interpret their work with drawings. As the booklets are compiled, students should be encouraged to share their work with

their classmates, families, or friends. Gradually they will realize that books contain what the author wants to say. At this stage, the transition can be made to a basal reader or a story book.

Classroom resources are an important adjunct to the reading process. Various kinds of charts, bulletin boards, calendars, maps, pictures, flash cards, and games can be used to stimulate and challenge the students' interest in reading.

Writing

Although reading is a receptive language activity, and writing is an expressive language activity, they can be developed together in a complementary way. Young ESL children may need to be taught how to hold a pencil, how to print on the line, and how to progress from left to right. All children need practice in letter formation, both upper and lower case, but ESL children, especially those whose native languages do not use the Roman alphabet, may need additional assistance. Letters printed on a flash card or on masking tape attached to a desk or table provide a handy reference until the students become familiar with them. Games and exercises that require the children to match words and pictures, or words with words, increase recognition skills.

Writing Activities

As mentioned in the previous section on the language experience method of teaching reading, copying evolves as a natural progression. Students practice letter and word formation, sentence patterns, and spelling as well as capitalization and punctuation.

Dictation is an activity that synthesizes the students' use of all four skills--listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The passage should be read aloud three times by the teacher: once for comprehension, once for writing, and once for checking. A controlled approach to composition, in which blanks are filled in, may be useful for some ESL students. For example:

> The man _____ driving his car yesterday.
> Suddenly he heard a shot.
> He _____ _____ _____.

Students may also suggest titles or one-sentence endings for stories, or rewrite in the past tense stories written in the present tense. Letter and journal writing are useful transitional activities when the student is ready to move from the group language experience story to a personal account.

Students should also be encouraged to manipulate language for the sheer delight it creates. Finding rhyming words helps children become aware of the sounds of the language; exchanging riddles helps them become sensitive to the ambiguities and possibilities of the language.

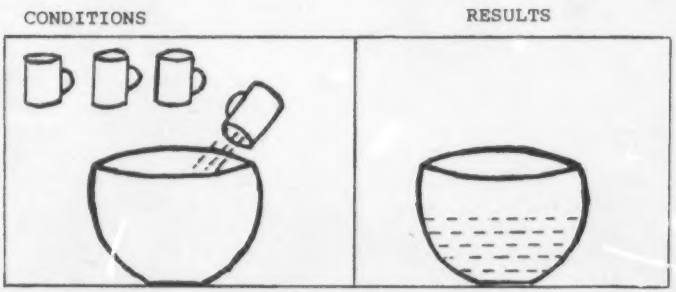
> Where is the best place to do your homework?
> At Macdonald's--They do it all for you.

Students can broaden their vocabularies by making word pictures, that is, by drawing the outline of an item such as a house and printing within the outline all the words they can think of associated with house. They can work alone and exchange ideas later or can brainstorm in small groups.

Most students, no matter how young, enjoy telling stories. Children who cannot yet write can dictate their story to a teacher or aide and watch it being written down. Older children can write their own short stories to be bound in a class story book.

Word games, crossword puzzles, and problem solving relate writing skills to thinking skills and emphasize the interrelationship of language components. Interpretation of charts, diagrams, and equations into written language helps students to translate comprehension into a language pattern.

> The bowl is larger than the cup.



If we put 4 cups of water in the bowl, then the bowl is half full.

Concept Development

It is important that young children be given every opportunity to develop cognitively while simultaneously mastering English. If the focus is solely on English language learning with no attention paid to cognitive development, the children's minds will stagnate in an atmosphere of meaningless repetitive drills. In order to function successfully in the upper grades, children must acquire, while young, a solid base of knowledge and intellectual or thinking skills, and if they are denied this opportunity, their progress in school will be delayed and failure will be certain.

All teachers of young children are aware of the need to assist them to develop concepts in order that they can deal intelligently with the world around them; and this is no less true for young non-English-speaking children than it is for English-speaking children. Concepts permit children to organize their perceptions of their environment, to incorporate new experiences into the framework they have built, to make generalizations, and to perceive hierarchies and associations. Concepts are involved in understanding and solving problems. Some concepts are universal, while others are culture-bound. As children absorb concepts, so they build their world view.

Concept development in young children (ages 4 - 7) is grounded in the here and now, in the immediate experience grasped through the senses. Early associations between objects and/or events are often made on the basis of immediacy or chance rather than on logic or function. But continued experiences with objects, ideas, and events, coupled with language that draws attention to the salient features of the experience, cause children to adapt and modify their early ill-formed concepts so that they grow closer to the meaning of the concepts held by the adults in the community. Initially, children are context-bound, but the acquisition of concepts enables them to move over the years from the realism of the moment to symbolism. Without this move, the realm of abstract thought--so vital in education--would be beyond their grasp. The word, which is important initially in drawing children's attention to the concept, serves later as the symbol for the concept which in itself incorporates the children's generalized and accumulated experiences. Language and thought are very closely related--each stimulates the other--making it possible for the teacher of young ESL children to teach English and strategies for reflective thinking simultaneously, to the great advantage of the children.

Before they come to school, children acquire many concepts that grow out of their concrete personal experiences. In school they learn new--and perhaps different--concepts that are consciously

and deliberately taught by the teacher and arise out of a combination of language and teacher-directed manipulation of the immediate environment by the children. In many cases, the concepts taught in school reinforce and extend concepts taught at home, but there are times when non-English-speaking children must learn concepts that appear to contradict those learned at home. The categorization of colors in the spectrum, or of fruits and vegetables, is not the same in all languages, nor are kinship terms, and it is necessary for children to learn, though not to accept as being in any way superior, the classification systems of the dominant culture in which they are going to spend the greater part of their lives.

Young children are full of curiosity, but the energy they put into their self-motivated learning is directed toward an immediate goal with the hope of immediate satisfaction. The suggestion that one learns English today in order to be able to use it tomorrow is not one that will have any appeal to young children, and the motivation to explore, describe, and understand the world around them will die if satisfaction is withheld. By presenting interesting and challenging tasks, teachers can use this abundant energy for the attainment by the children of more satisfying ends.

The most important implication of all this is that concept development should be the core of the ESL program. Concepts should promote language, which in turn should promote thought, thus preventing the period of mental stagnation that can occur when ESL children are taught only the form of language with little--if any--attention paid to its function or content. A further implication is that young ESL children must be given many direct opportunities to explore the physical and social world around them. Vicarious experiences such as filmstrips and pictures are only second-best.

Whereas in the past, ESL curriculum was based on language and moved sequentially from what were considered simple sentence structures to more complex structures, today's curriculum for young ESL children should provide a systematic and sequential presentation of concepts, the language necessary for their expression, and the reasoning strategies necessary for their manipulation. While teachers will have to make up programs to suit the age, background, and mental and physical development of the children in their care, the following are clusters of concepts that should be included (the list is not exhaustive):

- Identification of objects beginning with those that are immediate and personal: <u>body parts</u>, <u>clothing</u>, <u>objects</u> in the room.

- Classification according to color, shape, size, number, function, and kind, again beginning with what is immediate, personal, and concrete; comparing and contrasting these.

- Spatial relations such as near and far, in front of and behind, under and over. In every classroom, opportunities abound for both informal and formal teaching of spatial relations. Games, handicrafts, tidying up--all these involve varying aspects of space.

- Temporal relations such as past, present, and future; before and afterwards; since and during. Since time is less concrete than space, it presents an increased level of difficulty for some children. Some aspects of time are culture-bound, such as attitudes toward the future or the keeping of appointments.

- Emotional and familial relations such as love-hate, happiness-unhappiness, loyalty, family, kinship, self-others, child-child, child-adult. Many of these concepts are culture-bound. In North America, for example, far more emphasis is put on the individual than on the group. Some cultures differentiate between an uncle on the mother's side and an uncle on the father's side. Unless teachers are well aware of these differences, they may confuse the children.

- Ordering, which can evolve from one of the other concept clusters. Items that have been classified as big or little can be put in order from biggest to littlest. Yesterday's field trip can be reviewed in terms of what we did first, then next, and so on.

- Equivalency, which involves the recognition that although things may vary in some feature such as shape, they may, in fact, be equivalent in some other aspect, as when different shapes enclose the same area or when different shaped vessels contain the same amount of liquid. Practical experience with containers of the same or different size helps to develop the concept of equivalency.

The subject matter of the school curriculum will suggest many concepts or clusters of concepts that the children will need to master, such as measure (arithmetic, geography), color and shape (art), chronological order (history), and so on. (Ideas for bridging the gap between ESL children's conceptual and linguistic knowledge on entry and the objectives of the school curriculum will be found on pp. 35 - 42.)

In the development of concepts, talk is paramount. Teachers provide the verbal labels the children need, they draw atten-

tion to important features of the concept through language, and they compel the children in subtle ways to accept the challenge, wrestle with it, and to express in words both the process and the product. Peer interaction should also be encouraged, as the verbal exchanges that take place help children to organize both their words and their thoughts. Thought and language, i.e., the children's developing intelligence and their verbal skills, are interdependent and should develop concomitantly. A sample unit showing how this may be done follows the summary below of those principles that teachers need to know about concept development and the use to which they can be put:

Fact: 1. Concept development moves from the concrete to the abstract as the child grows older.

Application: First-hand, immediate, and concrete experiences are preferred over second-hand, distanced, vicarious experiences. The children should do it, see it, feel it, touch it, move it, taste it, and so on.

Fact: 2. Some concepts are universal; some are culture-bound.

Application: An awareness of which concepts are culture-bound will enable teachers to clarify for the children what may appear to be contradictory ideas. In exploring the makeup of the family, for instance, teachers can show that families can be small (single parent and one child) or large (extended family). No judgment should be offered as to which is better.

Fact: 3. Concepts depend on perceptions that are taken in by all the senses.

Application: Activities should employ as many of the senses as possible. Some children learn better through one sense than another.

Fact: 4. Concepts form the basis for further school learning.

Application: The core concepts of the school curriculum should be the core of the ESL program. Teachers in the school should be asked to contribute their ideas as to what these core concepts are.

Fact: 5. Concepts also lie at the heart of social relations and value systems, and these vary among cultures.

Application: Teaching bilingualism means teaching biculturalism, an important aspect of which is social behavior. Some children may have to learn to look adults in the eye when talking to them, or not to ask them how old they are!

Fact: 6. Language and thought are interdependent and mutually stimulating.

Application: ESL children need an environment that encourages exploration and talking both inside and outside the classroom. Interesting materials, field trips, and visitors are essential components of a good program.

Fact: 7. Language drills divorced from meaning (concepts) and pleasure are boring for young children and provide little motivation for concentration and effort.

Application: Language activities that engage the children by being relevant to their needs and interests will promote learning along with motivation for further learning. The repetition that children need can be provided through games and activities rather than through parrot-like drills.

Fact: 8. Learning a concept is not a one-shot deal.

Application: Children need a variety of experiences with a concept in a variety of situations with a variety of people. Each new experience will result in some modification, extension, or limitation of the concept.

Fact: 9. Concepts learned in the home often begin with the experience and move to the word. Concepts learned in school often begin with the word and move to the experience.

Application: Children entering school often have to learn how to learn in the way in which the school teaches. In some cultures, children watch and listen and then experiment--that is, language comes after the experience. In North American schools, language may precede or occur simultaneously with the experience. Teachers may have to prompt children to pay attention to language--their own and the teacher's.

Fact: 10. Learning in the higher grades depends on the children's being able to use words as symbols.

Application: Children must be encouraged to use words to describe experiences, objects, events, and ideas rather than to use gestures or actions, and to do this for past, present, and future experiences. In this way, they are helped to move from the concrete to the abstract mode of expression.

Fact: 11. Learning also depends on the children's having command of complex sentence structures and words that describe processes and show relationships.

Application: Children's language must be carefully monitored to see that they are mastering the required sentence structures and vocabulary needed for abstract thought. Teachers should encourage the use of words like "why" and "because" and constantly model for children the expressions they need.

Fact: 12. Children learn language and concepts from adults and from other children.

Application: Talking should not only be encouraged but should be planned for. Children can be paired or placed in small groups with or without an adult--depending on their age and language ability--to undertake a challenging task.

Unit and Lesson Planning

Each unit or lesson plan should consist of the purpose, divided into conceptual and language objectives, along with a method for attaining the objectives.

Sample Unit

Conceptual Objectives

Children will be able to classify by (1) color, (2) shape, (3) color and shape.

Language Objectives

Children will be able to use the basic structures

What __(color)_____ is this?
It's _____.

Where does it go?
It goes there.
Why does it go there?
Because it's _____.

Materials

Two hoops. Four sheets of construction paper--1 red, 1 yellow, 1 blue, and 1 green. From each piece cut a square, a triangle, and a circle.

Lesson A

Teacher holds up a red square and says, "It's red. What color is it? It's red."

Teacher points to other red objects nearby and says, "It's red."

Teacher repeats with red triangle and circle.

Teacher points to various red objects, including the shapes, and asks questions and elicits choral and individual answers.

T: What color is it?
S: It's red.

Teacher repeats with yellow, green, and blue shapes and objects teaching those colors.

It is important in the very early stages to use one sentence pattern. Other patterns such as "What color is this?" or "Is this blue?" can be substituted later. Form and meaning should be closely related at this stage.

Follow-up Activities

1. Child as Teacher. Each child acts as the teacher so as to give all students an opportunity to ask as well as answer questions.

2. I Spy. The teacher says, "I spy with my little eye something that is blue." The children ask, "Is it the book?" "Is it Caroline's dress?" The child who gives the correct answer takes over from the teacher. Children may use one-word answers initially ("Book?") if they have not mastered the question form, but they should be given practice and encouragement in using the sentence pattern, "Is it the _____?"

3. Coloring. The children draw and color rainbows or balloons and talk about the colors they are using.

4. Finger Painting. Using the four colors, the children make pictures with their fingers or blow drops of paint together to blend. They talk about what they are doing.

5. "Identifying" Games. There are any number of activities that require a physical response from the children, e.g., running and touching the color named; listening for the name of the color while the teacher tells a story and then running and touching it or running around the room; picking up the right colored square out of a pile. Additional colors can be worked into subsequent lessons as mastery of both the concept and the language is achieved.

Lesson B

This is similar to Lesson A except that the three shapes (triangle, circle, square) are substituted for the colors. Reinforcement activities should follow the teaching part of the lesson.

During the next few days, colors and shapes should be reviewed. The teacher should ensure that meaning (color and shape) and form (sentence patterns and vocabulary) are presented simultaneously and are understood.

Lesson C

The teacher lays two hoops on the floor, points first to one and then to the other saying, "This is the blue house. This is the red house."

The teacher picks up a blue square and says, "Where does this go?"

The teacher elicits a physical response by pointing to the hoop designated the "blue house" and says, "It goes there."

The pattern is repeated until the children seem to have caught on and are ready to put the objects in the appropriate house. Then the children take over asking and answering the question.

The teacher repeats with the yellow and blue shapes and objects, renaming the houses.

Follow-up Activities

These activities include sorting buttons, cards, pieces of material, etc. into piles according to color.

Lesson D

This is similar to lesson C, but uses shapes and designates the hoops as the "square house," "the triangle house," and the "circle house."

Lesson E (for the older children)

The lesson begins as for Lesson C, but after the child has indicated, "It goes there," the teacher asks, "Why does it go there?" and then teaches the answer, "Because it's blue."

Some children will be ready for a challenge. The teacher holds up a yellow card, points to the blue house, and says, "Does it go there?" and then elicits the reply, "No, because it's not blue."

The lesson continues, using objects of different colors chosen by the children.

Lesson F

This is similar to Lesson E, but uses shapes instead of colors.

Lesson G

The teacher designates one hoop the "blue house" and the other hoop the "square house." The teacher holds up the blue triangle and asks, "Where does this go?" and then elicits the correct response, "It goes there" (pointing to the blue house) or "In the blue house."

The teacher asks the question, "Why does it go there?" and elicits the response, "Because it's blue."

The teacher holds up the yellow square and asks, "Where does this go?" and elicits the correct response, "It goes there" (pointing to the square house).

The teacher questions, "Why does it go there?" and elicits the response, "Because it's square."

The teacher works through a number of pieces, making sure they are either square or blue, then finally holds up the

blue square and asks, "Where does this go?" Some children will point to the blue hoop and some to the square hoop.

It is likely that one child will see the need to overlap the two hoops and to place the piece in the common area created. The teacher asks, "Why does it go there?" and the child will answer, "Because it's blue and square."

Other combinations of color and shape can be used, and questions and answers can be rephrased. As stated earlier, the understanding of the concept and the language needed for its expression should develop together, the one stimulating the other. If any child seems to get lost in either the concept or the language, stop and go back to the beginning. Follow-up activities that draw attention to color and shape, challenge the children to classify them alone or together, and employ the language necessary for their expression should continue for some weeks after the actual teaching lessons. Both the concepts and the language need to be experienced and used in a variety of situations.

Units and lessons can be worked out using concepts from the list given previously. Once items have been identified they can be observed, described, compared, contrasted, collected, classified, criticized, sequenced, or arranged in hierarchies. Children can be asked to summarize what they have observed or learned, imagine what might happen if..., apply the knowledge to a new situation, make decisions about what to do next, and so on, allowing language to stimulate thought and thought to stimulate language.

Teachers who are preparing children to enter a higher grade should determine what concepts and language the children should have mastered prior to entering the grade and endeavor to give the children the necessary background.

Additional Examples

1. Conceptual objective

   Children will be able to name familiar classroom objects. (Identification)

   Language objective

   Children will be able to respond to the question "What's missing?" with the name of the classroom object.

Materials

Six or eight classroom objects such as a book, pencil, paste pot, piece of chalk, scissors, etc. ("Kim's Game").

All the objects are placed on a tray. The teacher names the objects and the children repeat the names. The children close their eyes while the teacher removes one object. After they open their eyes, the teacher asks, "What's missing?" The child who gives the correct response takes over from the teacher. This activity should be followed by having the children use the objects and talk about them.

2. Conceptual objective

Children will be able to name the other children. (Identification)

Language objective

In addition to naming each other, children will be able to use the pronouns my, your, his, her correctly.

Materials

A ball.

The children and teacher sit in a circle. The teacher holds the ball and says, "My name is _____. The teacher then throws the ball to another child who says, "My name is _____," and so on.

Variations

A. The child throws the ball to another child and says, "Your name is _____."

B. The child throws the ball to another child and says to the whole group, "His/her name is _____."

C. The information is expanded to "My first name is ____." "My second name is _____." (Ordering)

This activity should be followed by real and simulated situations in which the children introduce themselves and each other.

3. Conceptual objective

The children will be able to place the days of the week in the correct order. (Ordering)

Language objective

The children will be able to name the days of the week and use the words before and after.

Materials

A wheel chart with the days of the week in the spokes and a movable arm.

The teacher points the arrow to Monday and asks, "Which day comes before Monday?" The children reply, "Sunday comes before Monday." The teacher asks, "Which day comes after Monday?" and so on. The children can take turns being the teacher or can work with an English-speaking buddy. The children can close their eyes and answer without help from the chart when they are ready. Children should be encouraged to talk about what they did the day before or what they will do the day after.

4. Conceptual objective

The children will respond to words indicating a particular position in space. (Spatial relations)

Language objective

The children will be able to use the following terms: in front of, behind, beside, between, under.

The children stand near a chair or table, or anything that they can move around, crawl under, or sit on. Play "Simon Says," making sure that every instruction contains a preposition describing a spatial relation. Teachers will find many opportunities to use these terms in such situations as getting out or putting away materials, or in physical activities.

5. Conceptual objective

The children will be able to use kinship terms correctly and understand the relationships. (Familial relations)

Language objective

Children will be able to recognize and use the following terms: mother, father, brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother.

Materials

A mail-order catalog or advertising flyers, scrapbook or paper, scissors, paste.

The children cut out pictures from the catalog that represent either their own families or an imaginary family. These are pasted in their scrapbooks and named. Other family members can be added later. Stories can be made up about the families and dictated to the teacher. The objects mentioned in the stories can be cut from the catalog and pasted in the scrapbook.

Thematic Approach

An alternative to centering on the concept and moving from there to an activity is to pick a theme and to use it to introduce a number of concepts. The topic of "body parts," for example, can be used to foster the following concepts:

1. Identification. The children name the body parts.

2. Classification. The children group themselves according to height or color of eyes.

3. Space. The children put their hands on their heads, under their feet.

4. Ordering. The children draw an outline of their hands and place the drawings in order alphabetically by name, or by size.

Some themes that can be used to develop concepts are

- body parts
- clothing
- getting dressed
- food
- toys
- books
- classroom objects
- numbers
- alphabet
- birthdays
- days of the week
- months of the year
- dates
- money
- time
- addresses
- wild animals
- domestic animals
- transportation
- families
- weather
- community buildings
- community workers
- seasons
- shapes
- colors

Bridging the Gap to the Regular Curriculum

A major goal of the ESL program is to help the children move into the regular curriculum as soon as possible. Teachers often ask if there is an ESL curriculum, and there rarely is (and if there is it should be suspect!). The best curriculum for ESL children is the one the teacher devises, taking into account (1) the children's starting point and (2) the point in the regular curriculum where the children might reasonably expect to be, according to their age, once English language competency has been built up.

The difficulty that arises in trying to write an ESL curriculum that will fit all ESL children is that their starting points can be very dissimilar in the following areas:

- Age. Some ESL children may enter at kindergarten or grade one, that is, at the beginning of their education; others may come in at grade two or higher, transferring from one education system to another.

- Language competence. Some children speak no English on entry; others have control of basic vocabulary and simple sentence patterns.

- Motor skills. Some children have not had an opportunity to use scissors, paste, and pencils, or to play with balls and hoops, though they may have developed other motor skills that they are not asked to demonstrate in school.

- Reasoning skills. Some children may not have developed reasoning skills similar in kind and degree to those of their peers; others may be further advanced.

- Factual knowledge. Some children may not have been exposed to information to the same degree as their TV-saturated peers; others may have had experiences of life and the world beyond those of their teachers.

- Knowledge about processes. Some children may not know how common objects work because they were not part of their former environment, but they know how other things work that are not commonly found in their new environment.

- Behavior. Some children have learned different cultural behavior patterns.

- Learning styles. Some children have learned to learn by watching, listening, and experimenting--not by asking questions or by being asked questions. Learning styles are not identical across--or even within--cultures.

Some children may be ahead of their age groups in some areas and behind them in others. In order to determine what each child's individual program (curriculum) should be, the teacher should ask the following questions:

- What should a child of this age know or be able to do according to the curriculum guide?
- What is this child's current level of linguistic knowledge, concepts, manipulative skills, and social behavior?
- What linguistic knowledge, concepts, manipulative skills, or social behavior does this child need in order to function comfortably with the peer group?
- How can this child be helped to get control of the necessary knowledge, concepts, manipulative skills, and behavior?

It is obviously very important that teachers be aware of the various stages of development young children pass through, and that they be familiar with the goals and objectives of the program in which they work, whether this is at the level of kindergarten or in the primary grades. Teachers need to observe the children carefully and consistently so that they can make valid comparisons between the English-speaking children and the non-English-speaking children; an ESL child who seems to lack a particular skill may simply not have reached that stage of development, or the skill may not be one valued in the child's culture (e.g., tying shoelaces). There is a grave danger that young ESL children who do not appear to be as capable as their English-speaking peers will be labelled "slow learners" before they have had an opportunity to learn the language of communication, to master those skills and concepts needed to function in the new environment, and to overcome the culture shock they may be experiencing.

Young ESL children can be disoriented, when they come to school, by either the physical surroundings or the teaching methods. Some children have come from small rural schools or from no schools at all and are completely overwhelmed by the size of a modern North American school and the array of materials. Other children find that the teaching style and expectations of the

teacher bear little relationship to their learning styles and expectations, and they are confused both by the instructions of the teacher and the actions of the other children.

No curriculum imposed from above can take all these factors into account. Only the teacher who is prepared to modify the physical environment and to change his or her teaching style to accommodate each child's concerns can properly plan a program that will lead the child into the regular curriculum. The following points need to be considered:

Fact: 1. Children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds progress through similar stages in language development, conceptual development, and motor coordination at approximately the same age.

Application: By knowing what these stages are, teachers can make realistic appraisals of the children's abilities and will not expect them to perform at a level beyond their peer group. For example, young ESL children should not be expected to produce sounds that English-speaking children of the same age find difficult, such as the th sounds.

Fact: 2. Children from different cultures learn to learn in different ways; that is, some watch, listen, and experiment, but do not ask questions. In the average middle-class North American home, parents prod and prompt their children by asking questions and by encouraging their children to ask questions. Most schools follow this teaching/learning style as opposed to the rote memorization practiced in some schools overseas.

Application: If the teaching style of the teacher and the learning style of the children do not mesh, both will experience frustration and perhaps failure. Teachers must adapt to the children's learning style initially, as they are obviously too young to make the switch overnight. Gradually the teacher can introduce the children to another learning style, but the starting point must be the learning style the children absorbed at home or in their first school. For example, if the child is used to rote learning, the teacher can employ pattern practice while introducing discovery learning.

Fact: 3. Teachers need to be familiar with the curriculum goals and objectives as laid down by the educa-

tional authorities in their area and as advocated in their particular institution.

Application: A detailed examination of the goals and objectives will enable teachers to see the full range of learning (skills and knowledge) that ESL children require in order to be able to work comfortably alongside their peers. This range of learning includes not only what the children need across the curriculum at their particular age level, but also what has been covered in preschool or in the preceding grades. The goals and objectives can be further examined to determine their linguistic, conceptual, cultural, and social attributes, and to pinpoint specific thinking and motor skills.

Fact: 4. If the children are going to be integrated into another classroom or program, the more the teacher knows about the practices and expectations within that classroom or program, the better.

Application: As classroom practices and expectations vary among teachers and among schools, the teacher can help ESL children to make the transition and therefore to achieve success by preparing them initially for a specific situation. For example, some teachers use a particular reading approach; others have a set pattern for the opening exercises.

Fact: 5. Teachers need to know how to assess children's educational, linguistic, conceptual, and social development both formally and informally and how to monitor their progress.

Application: A knowledge of each child's current level will assist the teacher in planning a program that will move the children toward the goals and objectives commensurate with age without permitting gaps to develop in their knowledge, skills, or experience, and without requiring them to duplicate work completed elsewhere.

Fact: 6. Teachers must find ways of preventing young ESL children from feeling that they are either failures or somehow inferior because they initially cannot do or say the same things as their peers.

Application: Children who see themselves as failures will have difficulty reaching the goals they are capable of reaching. Teachers can use a variety of strate-

gies (praise, encouragement, support from other children and parents, selection of tasks within their capacity, etc.) to give the children a real sense of achievement even though what they do may not be identical to what their peers do--but genuine interest cannot be fak d!

Fact: 7. Teaching is a highly complex task. Every teacher needs support from time to time. Teachers should know where they can get help on both the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching ESL.

Application: If good support services are readily available, teachers can use them to ease their teaching load, to provide additional help to the children, and to improve the quality of their teaching--in other words, good support services enable teachers to create good learning environments that help children to reach their potential. They can also take some of the worry out of teaching.

The bridge to the regular curriculum has six steps leading to it:

First Step: Assess the Children to Find Their Current Level

The best assessment will occur over a number of days and weeks as the teacher observes the children in action and finds many opportunities to talk to them and to invite them to perform particular tasks. Information obtained from the parents when the children were registered may prove helpful, as well as background material on the children's previous education and social experiences (see pp. 2 - 4).

Beware of standardized tests. (1) They are culture-bound; (2) they may be too sophisticated linguistically; and (3) children from other cultures do not necessarily regard tests as important and therefore do not do their best.

Only if the children seem fairly close in language skills and concepts to their English-speaking peers should a standardized test be given, and even then the results should be interpreted with caution. Any children or adults who take tests in a language with which they are not familiar are unlikely to score as high as their ability would warrant. If these standardized test scores become part of the children's permanent scholastic records, they could affect their future by prompting low expectations in teachers and others. In the following pages, we will accompany a child through all six steps.

Example: Baljeet is five and speaks Punjabi. She can give her name when asked but otherwise says nothing in English and looks the other way when spoken to. She has difficulty handling pencils, scissors, paste, blocks, and jigsaws and shows no interest in books. She seems to enjoy physical activities and can follow directions after watching the other children. She can classify objects by shape, size, and color, but her limited English makes it difficult to check on her concept development. She talks extensively in Punjabi to her mother when she comes to pick her up. She has never attended kindergarten before. There is no reason to suggest that she is anything other than a normal five-year-old.

Second Step: Determine the Children's Probable Entry Point into the Curriculum

As far as possible, the children's entry point into the regular curriculum should be in accordance with their age. Children should not be placed a year behind unless there is evidence that suggests an immaturity in cognitive or social development.

Example: Baljeet should be prepared for entry into the curriculum at her age level.

Third Step: Determine the Linguistic Knowledge, Concepts, Manipulative Skills, and Social Behavior the Children Will Need in Order to Function Comfortably with the Peer Group.

The goals and objectives for the children's age group are examined and compared with the results of the assessment. The knowledge, concepts, skills, and behavior that the children need but do not appear to have mastered are listed and then examined in detail to discover their various components.

Example: According to a current kindergarten curriculum guide, Baljeet should be able to (a) greet people and (b) recognize signs and labels on shelves, lockers, and boxes (among other skills).

Greeting people involves the following:

- Recognizing greetings such as "Hi," "Hello," and "Good morning" and being able to respond
- Producing specific sounds such as the h in "Hi" and "Hello"
- Using an appropriate intonation pattern
- Being able to look the greeter in the eye when responding
- Knowing the gestures that accompany greetings, such as waving the hand to indicate "Hello" or "Goodbye"

- Knowing which greeting is appropriate in particular situations

Recognizing signs and labels involves the following:

- Understanding the relationship of writing to speech
- Recognizing English writing
- Recognizing the configuration of different words
- Being able to say the name of the labelled item and recognizing the word when it is spoken
- Knowing the function of the labelled items
- Recognizing the sentence patterns in which the label is often embedded, e.g., "Put it on the shelf," "Open the box."

Baljeet has shown no ability to perform either of these tasks so far.

In teaching a skill, concept, or language item, teachers should be aware of the process that English-speaking children went through before they learned something new, and should ensure that ESL children have an opportunity to go through the same process, if necessary, but at a faster pace.

It is particularly important that teachers ensure that ESL children have an opportunity to hear and reproduce the vocabulary, syntax, and idioms needed to achieve the various curriculum objectives, so that they can respond to language and express themselves so as to be understood.

Fourth Step: Write Objectives That Will Bridge the Gap between the Children's Current Level and the Objectives as Stated in the Regular Curriculum

Teachers are very much on their own as they write "bridge" objectives that will span the gap that exists between the children's present conceptual, linguistic, and social skills and those they need to add in order to function successfully in the new linguistic and cultural environment. Reference books and commercial materials can help to give some direction (see pp. 46 - 51 for suggested titles), but only the children's teacher can decide what the program should be.

Example: Bridge Objectives

Greetings

- Baljeet will wave "Hello" and "Goodbye."
- Baljeet will turn to the greeter and smile on being greeted.
- Baljeet will respond verbally to a greeting.
- Baljeet will initiate a greeting.

Recognizing signs and labels

- Baljeet will recognize the relationship between the written and spoken word.
- Baljeet will recognize words that look the same or different.
- Baljeet will be able to say the names of the labelled items.
- Baljeet will respond to instructions concerning the labelled items.

Fifth Step: Plan Various Activities That Will Capture the Children's Interest, Involve Them and Enable Them to Achieve the Bridge Objectives.

Young children do not learn through drills but through games and activities that involve them, so that they learn unconsciously in an atmosphere of relaxation and pleasure.

Example: Greetings

- The teacher makes a point of greeting Baljeet each morning face to face, encouraging the child to look at her and smile.
- Baljeet and another child use puppets to play greeting scenes using verbal and nonverbal language.
- Baljeet, the teacher, and the other children role-play greeting each other, other teachers, and visitors to the classroom and extend this to real situations.

Recognizing signs and labels

- Baljeet stands close to the teacher during story time and looks at the words while she listens.
- Baljeet traces letters with her finger on felt.
- Baljeet and the other children run and touch the sign the teacher calls; then each child, including Baljeet, acts as teacher and calls the sign.
- The class plays "Simon Says," involving short instructions that refer to one of the labelled objects, e.g., Simon says, "Open the box." Each child takes a turn as leader.

Sixth Step: Monitor the Children's Progress

Good record keeping done on a regular weekly basis is invaluable in making both teachers and parents aware of the progress children are making. Later, should any problem develop, these weekly notes may be of assistance in diagnosing the problem. Three simple questions can be asked that will help the teacher set next week's objectives:

1. What can the children do/say this week that they could not do/say last week?

2. What can they not do/say that is causing them difficulties?

3. What bridge objectives should the children attempt next week?

Given support and encouragement, and given opportunities to hear and use English and to learn new skills and concepts, the children will, in time, be able to stride over the bridge into the regular curriculum.

Intercultural Relations in the School and Community

Melting pot, mosaic, multiculturalism, cultural pluralism, integration, assimilation, marginal differentiation--what's in a name? Quite a lot, if no one knows how others define these terms. While most people would admit to a desire to live peacefully with their neighbors, the massive migrations that have taken place throughout the world--particularly since the end of World War II--have changed those neighbors from people who are "just like us" to those who are, in various ways, different. Small and large communities are having to reassess their relationships with people of different cultures, often a traumatic experience, because it involves assessing their own values and customs.

Leaving verbal labels aside, let us consider a few of the options available to people of different cultures living in the same community:

- The two groups can live totally apart from each other (the "two solitudes" as it has been called).

- One group can be totally absorbed by the other, so that little of its distinctiveness remains.

- The two groups can each retain their own language, religion, and culture, interacting only in such areas as employment, education, political life, and civic responsibilities.
- The two groups can interact positively, so that their values and customs enrich the total community. They can help to generate tolerance and understanding without imposing their views on anyone.

Bringing about good intercultural relationships is not easy. Courses designed to broaden people's understanding of a particular culture, thereby supposedly creating greater tolerance of and respect for the culture, have precisely the opposite effect on some people, confirming their dislike of and opposition to the members of that culture. People hold strong attitudes against certain groups, whether defined by race or ethnicity, for various reasons: some adopted their attitudes from their parents; some grew up in repressive homes where authority and intolerance made it impossible for the child to learn love, tolerance, and appreciation of others; some are afraid of what they do not understand and lack the patience to learn about what is new and different; some fear for their jobs or that their property may be devalued; while others believe in the supremacy of their own race. For the sake of the children, teachers and parents must do what they can to foster healthy intercultural relations. However, while intellectually, most people know that inflicting pain, whether physical or emotional, is wrong and stupid, emotionally, they have great difficulty in knowing what to do about it.

The schools, as one of the central institutions in a community, can have a positive effect on children and parents. One determined teacher can create an atmosphere or a movement that will spread far beyond the school. Here are some suggestions for actions that might be undertaken in a school:

- The principal and staff can discuss the current atmosphere in the school and the kind of atmosphere they would like to create, and work out ways in which the school can reflect the community it serves.
- Pictures and posters in the entrance hall and corridors, and classroom displays can have a strong effect upon both children and visitors and therefore should be carefully planned. One inner-city school with a very mixed ethnic population had pictures of children from all over the world displayed in the main hall along with the United Nations Charter of Human Rights. Another school had notices posted in the entrance hall and down the corridors, each beginning with the word "Don't." These reflected very different atmospheres!

- By listening to what the English-speaking children say to and about the ESL children, teachers can check on the undercurrents in the school and perhaps turn the comments to good advantage. A fifth grader on the playground was heard calling the ESL children stupid. It was explained to him that in the country these children came from, they did not play baseball. Incredible! So he set to work to teach them and became their friend and protector. Some teachers may need help, too!

- Parents often appreciate an opportunity to meet each other at lunches, teas, or class projects. If some of them accompany the ESL children on a field trip, they will soon see them as just children rather than as belonging to any particular ethnic or racial group.

- Stereotyped pictures, dolls, or films should be thrown out. Children should see the modern world, not a romantic, nineteenth-century version.

- Sharing food or cooking food in class is a good idea, but some children may have to be coaxed a little to taste different dishes. This type of project can extend across different subjects: arithmetic for measuring quantities, social studies for finding out the sources of different foods.

- A Heritage Day, when everything pertains to one country or one part of the world (though not necessarily only those areas represented by the ethnic mix in the classroom or school) can add excitement to learning.

- Dances and music from other lands can be incorporated into rhythm activities and physical education periods.

- Children can be encouraged to bring to school objects peculiar to their culture and to talk about them and show them off.

- Members of local ethnic groups are usually very willing to come to the school to talk to parents, teachers, and children.

- Ethnic studies is a rapidly growing field, and there are many excellent books dealing with the experiences of different groups within the dominant culture.

- Some schools have joined with other organizations in the community to sponsor special events, to the benefit of all concerned.

Resources

Support Services

The teacher is, in our opinion, the most important person in the educational system, and the teacher of young children is the most important teacher of all. To be maximally effective, the teacher needs good back-up services. Sometimes these are available, but not everyone is aware of them; sometimes they are not available and ought to be. The following support services are among the most important:

- teacher reference library
- alternate sets of commercial ESL materials and games (perhaps obtainable on loan)
- audiovisual aids and the necessary hardware
- an ESL consultant or experienced teacher who can visit the classroom
- a bilingual home-school worker
- translation services
- volunteer aides
- testing services

In addition, the classroom should be well supplied with sufficient furniture, materials, educational toys, and so on, to allow the teacher to run a varied and flexible program.

Reference Books

The following books will be of help to teachers planning programs for ESL children and should be readily available.

Carruthers, Corine. 1982. Open the lights. Toronto: Addison-Wesley.

This book offers a spiral and thematic approach to the development of language and concepts in young ESL children. It

contains ideas for many lessons and is a valuable resource for both ESL and regular classroom teachers.

Charles, C.M. 1974. Teacher's petit Piaget. Belmont, CA: Fearon Publishers.

This small book, based on Piaget's work, contains insights and practical suggestions for teachers.

CHILD (Co-ordinated Helps in Language Development): Language lessons for kindergarten. 1973. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and Portland Public Schools. Commercial Educational Distributing Service.

This is an eminently practical book that presents many ideas for developing language in kindergarten children, whether they speak English as their first or second language.

Falk, Julia. 1973. Linguistics and language. Lexington, MA: Xerox College Publishing.

This is a survey of the basic concepts of linguistic theory, with useful applications to other disciplines. Each section concludes with an annotated list of articles and books for further reading.

Finocchiaro, Mary and Michael Bonomo. 1973. The foreign language learner: A guide for teachers. New York: Regents.

The authors set out some basic principles for second language teaching in schools and then translate the theory into practice, always keeping the students in mind. The book covers all the communication skills and provides chapters on testing and curriculum development.

Fromkin, Victoria and Robert Rodman. 1974. An introduction to language. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

The chapters cover such topics as language origin, phonology, morphology and syntax, the diversity of language, and language change.

Garcia, Mary H. and Janet Gonzalez-Mena. 1976. The big E: An English language development program for the primary grades. Silver Spring, MD: Institute of Modern Languages.

This practical book for teachers of five- to eight-year-olds is a follow-up to Program for English experiences listed below.

Garvie, Edie. 1976. Breakthrough to fluency. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Gonzalez-Mena, Janet. 1975. Program for English experiences: English as a second language for preschool and kindergarten. Silver Spring, MD: Institute of Modern Languages.

A useful book full of ideas and of a convenient size to carry around. Activities listed are preceded by information on materials, linguistic objectives, general goals, and affective considerations.

Hatch, Evelyn. 1978. Second language acquisition: A book of readings. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

A collection of articles dealing with research into second language acquisition in children and adults.

Heath, Shirley B. 1978. Teacher talk: Language in the classroom. Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics/ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. ED 158 575.

The author describes the special characteristics of language in the classroom and suggests practical ways in which teachers of English as a first and second language can apply this knowledge to vary their "teacher talk."

McCracken, Robert A. and Marlene J. McCracken. 1972. Reading is only the tiger's tail. San Rafael, CA: Leswing Press.

This highly practical book is based on empirical evidence that suggests that an effective reading program should embrace all aspects of the language arts. The approach outlined is a good one for ESL children.

Moffett, James. 1973. A student-centered language arts curriculum grades K-13: A handbook for teachers. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Although this book is directed toward teachers of English-speaking children, it contains many ideas that can be used with ESL children. Its strong theoretical base gives teachers a foundation on which to plan their programs, and its concern with the classroom shows how the theory can be implemented.

Saville-Troike, Muriel. 1976. Foundations for teaching English as a second language: Theory and method for multicultural education. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

A very valuable resource, this basic text provides the jumping-off point for teachers who have little or no background in ESL and want to know more.

Scope. Teacher's book, stage 1: An introductory English course for immigrant children. 1971. London: Books for Schools, Ltd. (distributed by Longmans)

The course, developed in England, was written for 8- to 13-year-olds, but many of the ideas contained in Stage 1 could be used successfully with younger children. This guidebook naturally has a strong British flavor, but if teachers follow the adage of "adopting, adapting, and improving," they will find a variety of games and handicrafts that will assist in language and concept development.

Stauffer, Russell G. 1970. The language-experience approach to the teaching of reading. New York: Harper & Row.

This book provides a philosophy for this approach to beginning reading and a wealth of practical classroom activities for different age groups.

Stoddart, John and Frances Stoddart. 1968. The teaching of English to immigrant children. London: University of London Press.

This book has suggestions for teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as indicating the uses to which various visual aids can be put.

Thonis, Eleanor Wall. 1970. Teaching reading to non-English speakers. New York: Macmillan.

This book blends theory with many practical ideas. It covers not only the teaching of reading, but also the selection of materials and evaluation of progress.

Tough, Joan. 1977. Talking and learning. London: Ward Lock Educational.

For teachers who want to know more about the relationship of talking and learning, this book will provide some insights and some practical implications. One section is devoted to the teaching of English as a second language.

_____. 1977. The development of meaning: A study of children's use of language. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

This book deals with children's use of language and its implications for learning at home and at school. It gives many useful insights into the skills children already have when they arrive at school.

Useful Articles

The following documents, all of which are listed in the ERIC data base, are also recommended to teachers of young ESL children.

Allen, Virginia G. 1977. The non-English-speaking child in your classroom. Reading Teacher 30 (5): 504-8.

The author describes specific activities the teacher might follow in the classroom to meet the needs of ESL children.

Degler, Lois S. 1980. Reading instruction for the language minority child. ED 186 876.

A teaching guide that includes many suggestions from a group of English as a second language teachers in Nashville, Tennesee, where there are children representing 24 different non-English language groups.

Kirkland, Eleanor R. 1980. Language experience and the limited- and non-English-speaking child. ED 197 286.

Examples are given of how to teach limited- and non-English-speaking children to read and write English. Includes a section on how to plan, organize, and evaluate language experience activities.

Moustafa, Margaret. 1978. Bridging the gap between the ESL curriculum and the reading curriculum in the elementary school. ED 172 576.

Suggests that the gap between the ESL curriculum and the basic classroom reading program can be bridged in several ways: by bilingual education, through an individualized language experience approach, and by a process called "bridge English," which involves reordering what is taught in ESL classes to meet the specific needs of a specific reader.

_____. 1980. Picture books for oral language development for non-English-speaking children: A bibliography. Reading Teacher 33 (8): 9-14.

Indicates the value of picture books in teaching English to non-English-speaking children; lists a number of picture

books in two categories: those that are appropriate for children with little or no previous experience in English, and those for children in the limited-English-speaking stage.

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. 1978. A bibliography of English as a second language materials: Grades K - 3. ED 166 943.

Includes lists of useful ESL texts, readers, supplementary materials for group communication activities or individualized work, and tests that can be used to obtain some measure of the young child's command of English. Focuses on the child who lives in a community that lacks the necessary resources to provide him with a full bilingual education program.

Most documents identified by an ED number may be read or microfiche at an ERIC library collection or ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210. Ordering information for all those ED-numbered documents not available directly through the ERIC system can be found in the ERIC monthly abstract journal, Resources in Education.

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42. Indochinese Students in U.S. Schools: A Guide for Administrators. Language and Orientation Resource Center, CAL. $7.00. ED 208 680

Volume 5 (1981-82)

45. Teaching the Non-English-Speaking Child: Grades K-2, by Mary Ashworth and Patricia Wakefield. $5.75.
46. ESL/Coping Skills for Adult Learners, by Ellen D. Vaut. $5.00.
47. Children's Second Language Learning, by Barry McLaughlin. $7.00.
48. Creative Activities for the Second Language Classroom, by Diane W. Birckbichler. $8.95.
49. ESL/Literacy for Adult Learners, by Wayne W. Haverson and Judith L. Haynes. $6.00